Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of the claims replaces all prior versions of the claims in the application:

Listing of the Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of alleviating pain in a mammal, comprising contacting a neuronal cell of a cartilaginous tissue with an antagonist of a glutamate receptor, wherein said cartilaginous tissue comprises degenerating cartilage and wherein inhibition of binding of free glutamate liberated from said degenerating cartilage to said glutamate receptor on said neuronal cell alleviates pain.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said glutamate receptor is an ionotropic glutamate receptor.

3. (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein said ionotropic glutamate receptor antagonist is a non-N-methyl-D-aspartate (NMDA) type receptor antagonist.

4. (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein said non-NMDA receptor antagonist is chosen from the group consisting of a (S)-a-amino-3-hydroxy-5-methyl-4-isoxalone propionate (AMPA) receptor antagonist and a kainate-activated (KA) receptor antagonist.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said antagonist is an NMDA receptor antagonist.

6. (Original) The method of claim 5, wherein said NMDA receptor antagonist is MK-801.

7. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein said AMPA receptor antagonist is selected from the group consisting of GYK152466, CNQX, and NBQX.

8. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein said KA receptor antagonist is selected from the group consisting of LY294486, LY382884 and ACEA-1011.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said glutamate receptor is metabotropic glutamate receptor.

10. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said antagonist is a metabotropic glutamate receptor antagonist selected from the group consisting of [[L(+)-2-amino, 3-phosphonoproprionic acid (LAP-3)]] L(+)-2-amino-3-phosphonoproprionic acid (L-AP3) and (S)4-carboxy, 3-hydroxyphenyl glycine (CHPG).

11. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said antagonist preferentially inhibits binding of free glutamate to a mGlu2 receptor.

12. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said pain is selected from the group consisting of back pain, joint pain, and sciatic pain.

13. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said neuronal cell is a dorsal root ganglion cell.

14. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said cartilaginous tissue is herniated intervertebral disc tissue, and wherein said antagonist is administered spinally.

15. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said cartilaginous tissue is articulating joint tissue.

16. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~1~~ 15, wherein said articulating joint tissue is knee joint tissue.

17. (Currently Amended) ~~The method of claim 1~~ A method of alleviating pain in a mammal, comprising contacting a neuronal cell of a cartilaginous tissue with an antagonist of a glutamate receptor, wherein said cartilaginous tissue comprises degenerating cartilage and wherein inhibition of binding of free glutamate liberated from said degenerating cartilage to said glutamate receptor on said neuronal cell alleviates pain, wherein said cartilaginous tissue is an articulating joint tissue, wherein said articulating joint tissue is elbow joint tissue.

18. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said glutamate antagonist is administered directly into an epidural space.

19. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said glutamate antagonist is administered into spinal fluid.

20. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said glutamate antagonist is administered into a joint space of an articulating joint.

21. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein said cartilaginous tissue is herniated intervertebral disc tissue comprising a tear in a disc annulus, and wherein said antagonist is administered directly to said hernicated disc tissue to contact said glutamate receptor located in said disc annulus.